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EDUCATIONAL WRITINGS

Professor Thorndike's work in educational psychology is so well known, both in character and in its general conclusions, that lengthy comment will be unnecessary to introduce his latest contribution.¹ The title, "Briefer Course," which he has adopted for this book, gives a clear impression of its relation to his earlier work. This single volume is a condensation of the three large volumes on educational psychology which appeared last year. The divisions of this book are the same as the titles of the three volumes of the larger work.

The first division of the book is devoted to a discussion of the natural capacities of man, dealing with his instincts and modes of behavior. Then follows a discussion of the different forms of learning. The last section deals with individual differences and their causes.

Throughout the book the technical methods of dealing with these problems are presented and critically discussed. One notes in this volume, as in the larger work, the negative character of many of the conclusions. This tendency of Professor Thorndike to express in a critical way the attitude of the scientific student toward many of the beliefs of the educational world has very wholesome influence on the too optimistic supervisor and teacher. One will feel, however, that the positive contributions of educational science ought to be emphasized so that the teaching force in schools shall have something to substitute for the uncertain practices of the past. To leave the student with critical views with regard to discipline and fatigue and to deny the validity of the ordinary doctrines that are accepted is indeed a service, but it is only a partial service.

Furthermore, one finds it difficult to accept Professor Thorndike's psychological scheme because of its utter neglect of those

¹ *Educational Psychology, Briefer Course.* By Edward L. Thorndike. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1914, Pp. 442.

higher forms of activity which lie beyond the instincts and natural impulses. An educational psychology that does not recognize the fact that one of the chief subjects of instruction in the school is reading and that all of the activities of the school center about the development of language as a natural form of psychological behavior seems to the present writer to be a thoroughly deficient scheme of psychology.

The National Society for the Study of Education owes much to Professor Parker, who for a number of years has, as secretary of the Society, brought together in the yearbooks a body of very useful, scientific material. Professor Parker now retires from this position and gives place to Professor Whipple.

The last yearbook to be prepared by Professor Parker was worked out in collaboration with a committee of the National Education Association headed by Superintendent Wilson of Topeka, Kansas. This yearbook¹ is the outcome of investigations which the Committee on Economy has been conducting for some time past. Superintendent Wilson gives a summary of the different efforts which have been made to promote this general movement. Then follow some empirical discussions of the distribution of the subjects in the grades and typical experiments for economizing time in elementary schools. The particular subjects are then taken up: first, reading; second, hand-writing; third, spelling; fourth, composition and grammar; fifth, arithmetic; sixth, geography and history; and finally, literature. Each of these topics is discussed by an author who has devoted some special attention to the investigation.

There can be no doubt at all that educational science has now reached a stage where these detailed discussions of particular subjects promise the most productive contributions to the development of school work. The time was when general investigations were all that could be undertaken and the particular subjects were

¹ *Fourteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Part I, "Minimum Essentials in Elementary-School Subjects—Standards and Current Practices."* Edited by S. Chester Parker. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1915. Pp. 163.

allowed to work out their applications of the general principles resulting from these general investigations as best they could. At the present time the tendency is in the other direction. The particular subjects are being carefully analyzed with a view to determining in each case those processes which will be economical for the pupils and practical for the teacher who is training these pupils.

The papers published in this yearbook make it clear that further investigations are very much needed in each of the particular subjects. The present body of knowledge which is available is sufficiently encouraging so that the practical school man, as well as the scientific student, can find suggestions for his own work from the investigations that have been taken up by these various authors.

Among the various educational reformers whose influence is largely felt in the current practices of schools no one has been more significant than Pestalozzi. His influence in England and in America is attested by the acknowledgments given to his influence in such writings as Spencer's *Essays on Education* and the emphasis which has been given in this country to object teaching and other concrete forms of instruction.

A general summary¹ of his theories and activities is, therefore, a very useful contribution to the body of historical material that can be put into the hands of students. Since Quick's *Educational Reformers* there has been a disposition to summarize the general historical movements rather than to lay emphasis upon particular workers in the field of education. Professor Green has in this volume singled out Pestalozzi as an author of sufficient importance to be studied by himself. While there are suggestions regarding other influences in education, the treatment in a single volume of this one author will serve to emphasize once more the view which Quick so emphatically brought out in earlier days, that education advances just in the degree in which single individuals influence and modify social practices in the schools.

¹ *Life and Work of Pestalozzi*. By J. A. Green. New York: Warwick & York, 1915. Pp. 393.

The Teachers' edition of the *Elson-Runkel Primer*¹ aims to develop a method which the authors regard as relatively new and as a great improvement on earlier treatments of primary reading. The chief contention of this new method is that much preparatory oral work should be done before children take up the reading process in the first grade. This suggestion is psychologically sound. The reading process always follows the process of oral speech. The child's thinking is dominated by what he brings to the book in the way of oral language.

Whether the elaborate emphasis which is given in these suggested lessons on oral speech is necessary will have to be determined by the practical experience of teachers. The child has been acquiring during the period of home instruction a good deal of fluency in the use of words and sentences. It would seem as though this might be taken advantage of without so elaborate a scheme as is outlined in the book. There is certainly danger that the inexperienced teacher who takes this primer in hand and follows its methods will spend so much time on oral speech in the first grade that she will not get ahead with the main purpose of that grade in teaching the child a new form of acquisition of information and a new form of expression. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the outside activities of the school day furnish the child much opportunity for emphasis on oral language. While there can be no quarrel with the theoretical emphasis which is given to oral language, it still remains an open question whether this emphasis has not been overdone as a form of instruction.

The first part of the book which gives all of the reading exercises is another example of the attractive way in which modern reading-books are made. The illustrations and the text are above reproach on the mechanical side and make some use of those stories which have long been of interest to children. The first pages are of the conventional and somewhat formal type and will probably be open to the criticism that they do not furnish the interesting content that children get from some of the readers that begin immediately with the stories which they are used to repeating out of their common stock of folk-stories and rhymes.

¹ *Elson-Runkel Primer*. By William H. Elson and Lura E. Runkel. Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1914. Pp. 266.

This pamphlet¹ is the first of a series to be published by the Department of Education of Harvard University setting forth its relations with the Newton public schools, which are serving as a laboratory for a number of educational experiments. Many of these experiments relate to the high school, but an enumeration of them will suggest possibilities of similar work to be carried on in the elementary school. Thus an investigation is to be made of the possibilities of "differentiation in the treatment of pupils on the basis of the capacities they show for independent work in history, geography, and arithmetic." Another investigation is to deal with "the most advantageous disposition of the study period." There will be comparative studies of the best methods of teaching special topics such as long division, a study of the best methods of dealing with reviews, and so on.

There are so many higher educational institutions, such as colleges and normal schools, equipped with facilities for trying experiments of this sort that it seems surprising that the type of relationship suggested in this pamphlet is not more common. School systems should be persuaded to take advantage of the possibilities of affiliation with their immediate neighbors in carrying on the kind of research that will be immediately advantageous to the school systems themselves and also profitable for educational science.

Practical books on methods are very much in demand. Since the appearance of Bagley's *Educative Process* and McMurray's *Methods of the Recitation* a number of writers have tried their hand at this kind of application. The last effort² in this direction comes from an author whose experimental work in methods of study is of such a high character as to command attention for anything which she writes.

Miss Earhart has reviewed in the later chapters of her book some of the principles which she emphasized in her earlier experimental investigations. In addition she has brought together a

¹ *The School System as an Educational Laboratory*. "The Harvard-Newton Bulletins," Number 1. By William Setchel Learned. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914. Pp. 50.

² *Types of Teaching*. By Lida B. Earhart. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915. Pp. 277.

classification of different types of recitation and has presented the details of various plans for organizing and conducting recitations.

Miss Earhart is at the present time a principal of a public school in New York City and this book is the outgrowth of her effort to deal with her own teachers and others whom she is influencing in the direction of a more systematic treatment of the recitation.

The book presents its material in a very brief and sketchy form. The familiar distinction between inductive and deductive lessons is here to be found. The problem of assigning lessons and the various stages of the recitation are emphasized. Much is said about the social character of the recitation and the desirability of turning all of the school work in a direction which will cultivate a higher social appreciation and consciousness on the part of students. Indebtedness of the author to Professor Dewey and Professor Charters for much of the attitude expressed in the book is freely acknowledged and constantly exhibited.

The book will be found useful in the training of teachers who have had little or no experience in the actual conduct of recitations. It is very elementary in character and will undoubtedly make its appeal to a wide circle of readers.

The rural schools have been a subject of very vigorous discussion during the last five or ten years. The general changes in social conditions in the country and the necessity of a radical reorganization, both of the course of study and of the type of material equipment which will be tolerated for rural schools, have been commented on by every writer on general school conditions in America. The Bureau of Education has attempted to deal with this problem and numerous writers have taken up the theme. Dean Kennedy has attempted to call attention to the problems of rural life in a book¹ which is intended for the layman as well as for the technical student. Readers of his volume will miss some of the usual devices of the educational writer. The details of school organization which he would propose are suggested rather than carefully worked out. Yet there is an appeal in the book for a vigorous attack upon the problems of reorganization.

¹ *Rural Life and the Rural School*. By Joseph Kennedy. New York: American Book Co., 1915. Pp. 189.

In its style the book sometimes seems to appeal to analogies and to single incidents too strongly, but the reforms which it suggests are certainly needed.

The use of tests for normal and abnormal children has come to be so general that a summary¹ of the methods that have been suggested by students of educational science will be welcomed by those who are interested in getting a general view of this field. Stern is himself the author of a number of tests which are widely used. He has employed these tests in German schools more widely than any other single worker in Germany. He is fortunate in having a translator who is so completely familiar with work in this line.

Professor Whipple's statement in the translator's preface is that this "book affords the best, and in fact almost the only authoritative, critical and compact general survey of the literature of intelligence testing which is adapted for lay readers as well as for professional psychologists."

Three volumes of "Columbia University's Contributions to Education" may be commented upon briefly. The first² is a translation of Ebbinghaus' famous work on *Memory*. The influence of this book in suggesting methods of experimentation with the higher mental processes and the influence of Ebbinghaus' conclusions with regard to the rate of memorizing and forgetting are known to every student of educational psychology. Perhaps no single monograph of equal compass has exercised more influence on psychology than this. Its appearance in English dress will, therefore, be very welcome to many students who have not had access to the German original.

¹ *The Psychological Methods of Testing Intelligence*. By William Stern. Translated from the German by Guy Montrose Whipple. New York: Warwick & York, 1914. Pp. 160.

² *Memory*. By Hermann Ebbinghaus. Translated by Henry A. Ruger and Clara E. Bussenius. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1913. Pp. 123.

Professor Davidson's summary¹ of the recapitulation theory puts into the hands of the critical student a general statement of all of the evidences which bear upon the problem of organizing the course of study for the elementary schools in terms of the history of the race.

Professor Davidson draws a sharp distinction between the biological processes which have to do with physical development and the social processes which have to do with inheritance of the intellectual type which brings to the individual the products of earlier civilization. This latter or intellectual inheritance is recognized as following different laws from those which are followed in biological evolution. It is also pointed out that even in biological evolution, the environment in which the individual grows up serves to modify very notably the structural changes which have been characteristic of the race in its longer development. The uncritical acceptance of the recapitulation theory will accordingly be checked from whichever point of view one proceeds.

The third volume² of this series is one on *Teachers' Marks, Their Variability and Standardization*. Here a summary is given of the evidence that grading systems are very uncertain in their significance and in the use which individual teachers make of them. School grades, examination marks, and the marks given with the aid of standard school scales are critically examined.

The following quotation will make clear the results.

1. A given grade or mark means many widely different things to different teachers when they are rating pupils for promotion. . . .
2. In rating examination papers very great differences of standards appear among supposedly equally competent judges. . . .
3. Probably no uniform test in arithmetic should be given to all ages of pupils.
4. Rating of papers by means of statistically derived scales, when the judges are unpracticed in the use of the scales, but experienced in marking by the common methods, produces different results for different subjects. In drawing, the variability is greatly reduced by the use of the scale. In composition, the variability is somewhat greater with the scale than without it.

¹ *The Recapitulation Theory and Human Infancy*. By Percy A. Davidson. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1914. Pp. 105.

² *Teachers' Marks, Their Variability and Standardization*. By Frederick James Kelly. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1914. Pp. 139.